The Last Sunset

Jacob walked out of his cabin on the side of the mountain and down the front steps. He looked out to the west and the sky had not changed and he still heard and felt the low rumble in the earth beneath his feet. He knew it was time for all of this to end. He had been into town yesterday and many people who were friends and others who were not were gone. He assumed that the Rapture had happened. His exceedingly large Rottweiler Charlie came bounding around the corner of the cabin back from his nightly foraging. He stepped up and nuzzled his snout against Jacob's leg. "Hey buddy, how are you this morning? Any luck last night?" Charlie almost seemed to smile at him in recognition and answer to his question.

Jacob took a sip from the coffee mug his was holding and sat down on a bench in his gazebo. Charlie lay at his feet as he stared out at the strange looking sky. As they sat Jacob noticed movement back by the cabin. He heard the steps on the hard rocky ground and saw a man walking towards him. Charlie came to the all too familiar alert posture and bound down off the gazebo towards the man. Jacob stood to protect the stranger and froze mid stance. Charlie was running around the stranger as if he were a long-lost friend. Jacob froze not because of Charlie's actions but because of an overpowering understanding of recognition. The tall slim man with long dark hair stopped at the foot of the steps to the gazebo and smiled up at Jacob.

"Jesus." He gasps as he sat back down. "Yes Jacob, it is me. May I join you?" "Yes, yes please come and sit. Why are you here?" Jesus scratched Charlie on the head. "Magnificent animals aren't they Jacob." Jesus looked up and into Jacob's eyes. "The real question is why you are here Jacob?" Jacob looked back at Jesus and frowned. "Do you remember Jacob? Do you remember why you are here?" Jacob moved around on the bench in a manner to show his uneasiness with the situation. "The last time I saw you Pilate had just given me over to you and your friends. I still bare the scars from your flagrum."

"After our little walk from the courtyard to the Praetorian when all your friends were there and you wove my crown from the Hasselquist and placed it on my brow." Tears ran down from the corners of Jacobs's eyes as he tried to look away. "You struck me in the face and cursed me as I fell to the ground. It was this single act that has kept you here for all these decades." Jacob sniffed and looked Jesus in the eyes. "I have begged for your grace since that day. I had no faith then and work at keeping grace now. Still I am

here.”

“Yet you stood at my feet as I hung in disgrace and drank and cursed and spat upon me.” Jacob shook with the recognition of eons of understanding and fear. “I am here Jacob to offer you the chance to free yourself. The chance to save and free others. There are millions of unsaved souls here.” Jacob looked at Jesus. “How can I redeem myself for such a horrible act? What could one man do?” Jesus stood and looked out over the mountains. “Time is short Jacob. You asked me what one man can do. I was but one man, look around. What did I do?" There was a long uncomfortable silence before Charlie laid his head in Jacob’s lap. Jacob rubbed Charlie’s head and sighed.

“Jacob, you must give of yourself as I did. Without reservation and without pride. The battle within you between Grace and Pride needs to end. You must decide and act.” With that Jesus walked down the steps of the gazebo and turned to face Jacob. “Jesus, please tell me what it is I must do because I fear I may take the wrong path again.” Jesus reached out and took Jacob’s hands in his and smiled. Jacob felt a passion and peace he had never known. “You know what you must do. You must release yourself to faith.” Jesus let Jacob’s hands go. “God will bless you with forgiveness Jacob. You just have to do what you know in your heart is right.” Jesus turned and walked away.

Jacob walked back to the bench with his hands still clasped together as if Jesus were still holding them. He felt a pain rise in his hands and surge through his body. Not the type of pain you would feel from an injury, but the pain felt by millions of people all at once. He was overwhelmed with sadness and despair. He knew who else had felt this pain. As his eyes cleared and he sat up he opened his hands. Inside was a twig of Hasselquist baring three large thorns. He looked out to see no one around as he had expected. He looked back down at his hands and the twig, a smile of relief and understanding crossed his face. He looked at Charlie and clenched his fist tightly. As he saw the rivulets of blood pour from his clenched fist he felt peace. He looked out across the sky as the earth fell away under his feet.

He knew he had done the right thing…